

THE INAUGURATION

OF THE

Ladies' Home

FOR

SICK AND WOUNDED SOLDIERS.

Lexington Avenue, cor. 51st St., New-York,

MAY 2, 1862:

WITH THE ADDRESS OF HIS HONOR THE MAYOR AND OF
OTHERS, DELIVERED ON THE OCCASION.

NEW YORK:

J. H. DUYCKINCK, PRINTER AND STATIONER,
164 PEARL STREET

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INAUGURATION

OF THE

Ladies' Home for Sick and Wounded Soldiers.

THE formal opening of the "LADIES' HOME FOR SICK AND WOUNDED SOLDIERS," located on the corner of Lexington Avenue and 51st Street, took place May 2, 1862, in the presence of a large number of ladies, the Mayor and Common Council, and many of our prominent citizens. The exercises were held in the large hall on the second floor, which was decorated with flags. Over the platform at one end of the room was suspended, with outstretched wings, a fine specimen of the American eagle.

National airs were performed by the Band of the Eighth Co., National Guard, gratuitously furnished by them for the occasion.

Mayor OGDYKE presided, and in opening the exercises said:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

The occasion that has brought us together is one of deep interest. The ladies, ever foremost in good works, have fitted up this spacious building for the reception and treatment of disabled soldiers; and they have invited us to join them to-day in formally dedicating it to that beneficent purpose, under the name of the "LADIES' HOME FOR SICK AND WOUNDED SOLDIERS." The name is fitly chosen, and most suggestive. Its simple utterance to the war-worn sufferers for whom it is intended, must revive their spirits and alleviate their pains; for, as sons, brothers or husbands, all of them have shared, and can, therefore, appreciate the sympathy and tender care of the gentler sex. At the promise of such an asylum, their eyes will brighten and their

pulses quicken; for they will know that from the moment they enter its threshold, they will exchange the rude treatment of iron-handed war for the comforts of home and the tender care of woman. Nor need they fear that there will be any failure to keep the promise implied in the inviting name which the ladies have given to their hospital. It will be to its inmates emphatically a *Home*, with every appliance for the alleviation of their sufferings that skill and earnest sympathy can suggest. The building itself is a model of its class, and admirably adapted to the purpose to which it is now to be applied. The wards are large and well ventilated. They have been thoroughly cleansed, and fitted up with appropriate furniture and excellent bedding. The surgical and medical staff embraces the best professional skill in the city. The nurses will also be the best of their class, and, better than all, the ladies themselves, or at least a portion of them, will be in constant attendance, to infuse into the hearts of others a share of that devotion with which they apply themselves to this beneficent work. Their efforts could not be employed in a nobler cause. Those for whose welfare they are laboring richly merit all that can be done in their behalf. At their country's call they promptly repaired to the theatre of war, voluntarily, and without a moment's hesitation, exchanging the enjoyments of home for the privations of camp and the dangers of the battle-field. They did not stop to count the cost. They knew that our cherished Union and its glorious emblem had been assailed by traitors, and with an unselfish patriotism, worthy of all honor, they instantly rallied to their rescue. And right nobly are they performing their heroic mission. The infamous rebellion, as we all hope and believe, is well nigh suppressed. But in the accomplishment of this, many of our gallant volunteers are returning, disabled by disease or wounds. These demand our special care. We cannot too bountifully provide for the wants of such brave but unfortunate defenders, and I am sure you will all rejoice with me in the opportunity of sharing in this laudable effort to restore them to health and happiness.

His Honor, the Mayor, then introduced Chancellor FERRIS, who said in substance, that he had been requested by the ladies engaged in this good work, to submit their views and plans in conducting their new undertaking, and he with pleasure yielded to their wishes, and felt himself highly honored by their request.

He said this association grew out of a feeling of deep interest in the condition of the brave men, who were battling for the government at the risk of the loss of health, of life and limb; they had made great sacrifices already, and would be subjected to many more. For the comfort and relief of the sick and wounded among our noble volunteers, was thus none prepared; and the ladies interested in it, animated by a truly christian and patriotic spirit, are pledged not only to give to the sufferers such care as their bodily ailments require, but to afford them the consolation of religion in the way they desire. Christian charity is catholic—the ladies are of various religions denominations, but having brothers, sons and husbands in the Volunteer Union army, they are united in their desire to relieve the sick and wounded soldier. The government is doing all in its power by liberal provision for hospital attention, but, however large or extended, it must lack necessarily the tenderness and nursing which the hand of woman in the home circle alone can exercise. This institution is not merely a *Hospital*, but a "*Home*," where the stricken and the sick will have those to care for them, who will be the representatives of the loved ones whom they left behind, when at their country's call they hastened to the seat of war.

For the use of this building, so admirably suited to meet their benevolent purposes, the ladies are indebted to the Common Council, and his Honor, the Mayor. The medical staff engaged consists of some of our best physicians and surgeons, and to Dr. SATTERLEE, President of the Board, they are indebted for much valuable aid and counsel, as well as his personal co-operation. And now, what patriotic heart will not say, God speed to this enterprize—and from how many home circles in every part of this and our sister states, will there not go up thanks to God for the kindness which will here be shown to those they love? Yes,

the blessing of Him who went about doing good will abide under this roof.

The ladies believe it to be only necessary to state the fact, that this institution is dependent for its maintenance on the liberality of our citizens, to secure their hearty co-operations; and they solicit also the aid of the ladies generally, of the City of New-York and elsewhere, to assist them in every possible way to carry on this work of mercy; and provide as far as in their power, such comforts as will tend to restore the sick to health, and heal the wounds of their brave defenders.

Portions of Scripture were then read by the Rev. Dr. GILLETTE; appropriate addresses were made by the Rev. Dr. KOOPMAN, Mr. BRIGGS, and President KING, of Columbia College, whose short speech was received with enthusiastic applause. After which General ROBERT ANDERSON was introduced, who read the following letter from Commissary General WELCH.

COMMISSARY GENERAL'S OFFICE,

New-York May 1, 1862.

MRS. GEORGE OPDYKE,

President of the "Ladies' Home for Sick and Wounded Soldiers."

MADAM:—I have the honor of tendering on the part of the State, for the acceptance of your association, the national flag which accompanies this note, with the request that it may be permitted to wave over the building devoted by you to the care and convalescence of sick and wounded soldiers, regretting meanwhile, that official engagements will deprive me of the pleasure of attending the opening ceremonies to-morrow.

In thus asking your acceptance of this slight testimonial of the public regard, I may be pardoned for adding that the objects of your association are every where applauded, and that your humane and self-sacrificing labors will again illustrate how exalted is the mission of woman, "when pain and anguish wring the brow."

With sentiment of profound respect, your very humble and obedient servant,

BENJ. WELCH, Jr.,

Commissary General.

General ANDERSON said he would not attempt to make a speech, because it was not his duty. His heart was with them on that glorious occasion, and in the noble work in which they were engaged. God would bless them. In the discharge of their duties, he exhorted them to go cheerfully on. They could not be engaged in a better cause. At the conclusion of the present rebellion, they would be a better and more united nation than ever before. This war had been brought upon us by our own wickedness, and it would be concluded when that God whom we had offended would become appeased. He had no bitter feelings against our brethren of the South. He would thank God when, at the conclusion of the present contest, they would become united as brothers again.

The flag then presented through the Seventy-first Regiment, New-York State Militia, was received by the venerable Dr. VALENTINE MOTT, in the following patriotic address:

GENTLEMEN AND SOLDIERS:

It might seem more proper for these ladies to respond to your noble sentiments, but delicacy and a commendable diffidence have induced them to select the present speaker to reply. I fear, however, that in their selection diffidence has not been altogether avoided, nor ability completely secured; for the task is to me quite new, and so delicate, that I acknowledge I approach it with great sensitiveness.

I cannot expect, it is true, fully to express the extent of their gratitude, or their high sense of the honor conferred upon them in thus placing the emblem of their country's glory over this home of the sick and wounded soldier—yet I know that though my words may be feeble, the spirit of generous patriotism which glows in your bosoms, and your pity for the brave men who have incurred wounds and death in defending the honor of this flag, will interpret my words with increased power.

The ladies accept your beautiful flag, and tender you their sincere thanks. It bears our national colors in all their pristine integrity unmarred—the “field” is as blue as the heavens above us—and the “stars” are as bright as those that shine

down upon us through our clear American sky—while the “stripes” are rosy and white as the early dawn that ushers in the bright and vernal day.

Again, the ladies thank you, with the warmth of their enthusiastic nature, and trust that the work of mercy which its ample folds protect, will prove more grateful to your loyal hearts, than any acknowledgment their high appreciation of your precious gift could dictate.

“When freedom from her mountain height
Unfurled her standard to the air,
She tore the azure robe of night
And set the stars of glory there ;
She mingled with its gorgeous dyes
The milky baldric of the skies,
And striped its pure celestial white
With the streakings of the morning light.”

And now, gentlemen, permit me to express my own feelings on this interesting occasion. When man desires to know what is noble, what is generous, pure, just and holy—to woman he ever turns. It is her palpitating heart, that nerves his brawny arm. For her protection and his country’s honor, he girds the soldier’s armor on, and, when wearied and worn by the toilsome march or deadly struggle with the foe, he sinks on the cold earth to rest his weary limbs—dreams of home, sweet home, steal upon his sleeping senses, and again he mingles with family and friends—again listens to the silent footfall of woman, and the artless prattle of childhood. If wounded, some woman’s name leaps to his lips, and, as his life flows out, while the mists of death gather around him—her form shines down upon him from the portentous cloud, undimmed in all its original brightness. It is proper, then, that woman should lead in this labor of love.

“Oh! woman, in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please ;
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel—thou.”

It was Woman who bathed the feet of the houseless Wanderer with her tears, and dried them with her hair; Women were the

last at the cross, and first at the tomb; and it was when Women mourned their dead, that Jesus wept.

For eighty years, this flag has waved over every sea and every land. Beneath its broad folds, Washington fought, and Warren fell. Franklin, and Jefferson, and Hamilton, lived and flourished under its protection. Jackson, Bainbridge, and Decatur, served under it, and illuminated it with a blaze of glory.

With myself all the most tender associations of my native land, cluster around it. Under its shadows, I have traversed not only the civilized countries of Europe, but the regions of the barbaric East. The turbaned Turk owned its sway, and the wild Arab felt its power. It was a talisman among the poor Greeks, and imperial Rome acknowledged the symbol. In France, it was a recommendation, and in England a protection. How then, O emblem of my country's renown, could there be found a parricide wicked enough to lift his arm against thee, and with profane hand deface thy glory? What blot had come upon thy fair fame, that any new and strange device should be introduced among thy folds? Bird of my country, what infatuated hand has pierced thy breast, with an arrow feathered from thine own wing?

Soldiers,—the city of New-York will not be found forgetful of her defenders; under the stars and stripes you have fought and bled, and here shall that banner float lovingly and peacefully over your place of rest. No hostile shell will explode within these walls, devastating these wards with fire and death. No howling projectile will invade these sacred precincts. Here is the abode of peace—here love and tenderness will come, to smooth your pillow with their soft and delicate hand. Here hope will attend to cheer you with the prospects of a brighter day. Here pity will weep over your wounds, while mercy seeks to alleviate your woes. Here patriotism will proclaim your noble deeds, while history writes down the record on her lasting tablet; and if death come—as come at times he must, and sit by the fire-side with his feet upon the hearth—your country will crown the pale King with laurels, and surround him with a halo of glory.

“ For to the hero when his sword
Has won the battle for the free,
His voice sounds like a prophet's word,
And in its hollow tones are heard
The thanks of millions yet to be.”

This flag shall be placed over our hospital; your comrades in arms have borne the sacred emblem through the sulphurous clouds of war; amidst a tempest of bullets and the din of arms, it has been victoriously planted on the strongholds of the traitorous hordes, who would rob it of its bright renown, and onward, still triumphant in its course, shall it be carried by our noble Volunteers, until amid the roar of Artillery, the thunder of battle, and the shoutings of the Captains, it is restored to the proud place it has ever held among the flags of nations. It is right our brave soldiers should here repose, in the “Home,” which their countrywomen have provided for them.

Henceforth, then, let these stars proclaim, that this is the “Soldier's Home,” and let them rest—above it—even as the Star of Bethlehem came and stood over the place where the Prince of Peace was born; and when the eye of the wounded soldier, faint and drooping, sees this bright constellation, he will know that his services are remembered, and that our patriotism loves and honors and protects his valor.

“ Flag of mercy and of hope,
Each soldier's eye shall brightly turn
To where thy sky-born glories burn.”

At the request of the Mayor, the audience rose and united in singing the Star Spangled Banner, Alderman DAYTON leading.

The ceremonies were closed by a dedicatory prayer by the Rev. Dr. HUTTON, and a benediction pronounced by the Rev. Dr. HOUGHTON.

